

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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GOV. EASLEY ADDRESSES POLITICS AND VALUES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME *Core Principles, Consensus Building, Focus on Common Good Must Guide Policy Development*

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today offered a view of how a governor sets and implements public policies that are consistent with his values. Easley was invited by the University's Department of Economics and Policy Studies and the Hesburgh Program of Public Service to talk about how he has applied values to governing during his two terms as governor as well earlier in his public life as North Carolina's attorney general and a district attorney. The Governor, in a speech titled "Intersection of Values and Politics in Modern American Life," discussed how leadership should be based on core principles focused on the common good, the dignity of citizens and consensus building to help meet the challenges of the 21st century.

"Good values set in motion in small steps can create great change, and small departures from those values create huge problems," Easley said. "Implementing policy to help the weak, or 'least among us' begins with defining those in need, oppressed or struggling. More often than not, important endeavors seem more mundane than noble. But small steps properly taken for noble purposes ultimately strengthen the weak among us."

Easley, who entered office in 2001, said stressing commonly accepted goals helped build consensus and assure that priorities were addressed. The Governor described education as his top priority, and that even in the face of a budget crisis during his first term, Easley looked and fought for ways to increase educational investment.

"The best way to help the weak is to make them strong to begin with," said Easley. "Education is key to that strength."

In 2001, Easley launched a pre-K program, *More at Four*, for at-risk 4-year-olds so they are ready to learn when they start school. In addition, he has been able to win funding to cut class size ratio in kindergarten through third grade to 18 students per teacher.

Easley has implemented a series of high school reform initiatives since taking office in 2001 to address the drop out rate and make education more relevant to students. In September 2003, with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Easley launched the N.C. New Schools Project to assist in the creation of small, economic development-themed high schools across the state. These new schools focus on growing economies such as health and life science, engineering and computer technology. Easley has opened 25 of the new schools and plans to open 10 more in 2007.

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